



The Environmental Action Committee of West Marin

April 17, 2008

Ms. Susan Golding, Chair and Task Force Members
MLPA Blue Ribbon Taskforce
c/o California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814
Via Email: MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov

Re: Support for Proposal 4

Dear Chair Golding and Task Force Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin. The Environmental Action Committee of West Marin (EAC) is a grass roots group dedicated to the protection and appreciation of West Marin's natural environment and rural character. We strive to ensure that human activities are in harmony with the region's irreplaceable wildlife.

While we support proposals 1-3 and 4, EAC urges the Blue Ribbon Task Force to choose Proposal 4 as its preferred alternative for the Marine Life Protection Act's North Central Region. Of the three options for your consideration, Proposal 4 best meets the letter and spirit of the Marine Life Protection Act of 1999 and the Scientific Advisory Team guidelines. It also best meets the needs of marine life on the west coast of Marin County.

I was fortunate to participate as a primary Regional Stakeholder Group member for the North Central Coast Process. I am also an avid kayaker and wildlife watcher. I feel honored to have been involved in the process over the last eleven months. While all three proposals attempt to satisfy the requirements of the Scientific Advisory Team and the Act, Proposal 4 provides the best long-term solution to protect marine resources and provide for the long-term sustainable use of our ocean.

The MLPA states that "marine life reserves" (defined as no-take areas) are essential elements of an MPA system because they "protect habitat and ecosystems, conserve biological diversity, provide a sanctuary for fish and other sea life, enhance recreational and educational opportunities, provide a reference point against which scientists can measure changes elsewhere in the marine environment, and may help rebuild depleted fisheries." Last February, the Blue

Ribbon Task Force supported the spirit and letter of the Act by directing the RSG to develop marine protected area proposals comprised of a strong backbone of no-take reserves and other high protection areas. If we are to judge the proposals according to the above guidance, Proposal 4 stands out among the rest.

Proposal 4:

- Received the highest ranking by the Scientific Advisory Team in meeting MLPA guidelines.
- Protects 15 percent of the ocean in no-take marine reserves, while leaving 85 percent open to fishing and including biodiversity hotspots, nurseries and other high quality habitats.
- Has more MPAs in High to Very High protection levels than the other proposals.
- Has the support of a wide range of interests including local residents, scientists, conservationists, and recreational users.
- Has small, worst case, short-term socio-economic costs in comparison to the potential long-term socio-economic and ecological benefits.

Proposal 4 also provides key protection for habitat in desperate need of restoration in the Duxbury-Double Point area. Duxbury Reef supports rich and diverse invertebrate communities and the potential for a robust rockfish fishery. Many local residents reminisce that this area once supported a strong rockfish fishery but it has been depleted due to over-fishing. Proposal 4 would help restore rockfish populations in this area by protecting approximately ¼ of the complex rocky reef habitat, allowing ample opportunities for recreational and commercial fishing of rockfish and other fish species.

Proposal 4 also has a marine protected area encompassing Double Point and Point Resistance. This protects important juvenile rockfish habitat adjacent to high density bird nesting and seal haul-out sites, providing forage base for tens thousands of birds and seals. The addition of these marine protected areas provides a strong foundation for the long-term health and diversity of the sea mammal, bird and fish populations that Point Reyes National Seashore and Farallon Islands are world renowned for.

Point Reyes National Seashore alone had approximately 2.7 million visitation days in 2007. The majority of these visitors enjoyed non-consumptive activities such as wildlife watching for whales, seals and sea birds, kayaking Drakes Estero and simply enjoying the scenic views where the peninsula meets the ocean. The socio-economic impact of non-consumptive tourism on the local economy far surpasses that of consumptive uses on the Marin County coast. This theme likely holds true for the entire study region. Therefore, even if Proposal 3 is chosen as the preferred alternative, we urge the BRTF to include Proposal 4's MPA package for the Duxbury-Double Point area.

Unfortunately, proposal 2/XA omits these important habitat areas, failing to protect unique habitat with high restoration value. This is one more example showing that while 2/XA may attempt to meet the bare minimum requirements of the Marine Life Protection Act, it does not

strive to ensure the long-term restoration of native ecosystems and wildlife on the north central coast..

Marine protected areas, especially fully protected marine reserves, are an investment in the future health of our coastal waters. You have an historic opportunity to make a real difference in the protection of our oceans for current and future generations. We urge you to make the most of that opportunity by adopting Proposal 4.

Thank you for considering EAC's comments on this precedent setting opportunity to do for our marine habitat what we have striven for decades to accomplish on land. I appreciate the BRTF's involvement and commitment to this effort and look forward to next week's deliberations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frederick Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "F" and "S".

Frederick Smith
Executive Director